



WATER'S EDGE
July 9th to August 15th,
Union Station to Pearson International Airport



Press Release

Consulate General of the United States of America • 360 University Avenue • Toronto

July 23, 2015

For Immediate Release

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE SUPPORTS PANAMANIA THROUGH TWO ARTS ENVOYS

Leveraging the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the U.S Consulate General in Toronto is hosting “Wheelchair Tango” of the American DanceWheels Foundation as part of the cultural programming in PANAMANIA taking place during the Pan Am Games. From July 21-22, Wheelchair Tango was featured as a part of the free PANAMANIA program series at Nathan Phillips Square and the group will perform at the Pan Am Games closing ceremony on July 26, 2015.

Through the U.S. Department of State’s Arts Envoy program, the U.S. Consulate General funded Wheelchair Tango and environmental photographer James Balog’s participation in PANAMANIA’S Water’s Edge photography exhibition in Union Station and at Pearson International Airport. The Arts Envoy program shares the best of the U.S. arts community with the world and sends American arts professionals, like Wheelchair Tango and James Balog overseas to conduct workshops, give performances, and mentor young people.

American DanceWheels is a non-profit organization that teaches Wheelchair Ballroom and Latin Dance. Wheelchair dancing integrates people with and without physical disabilities. Melinda Kremer, Executive Director of American DanceWheels Foundation says “this style of dancing has the extraordinary power to bring the abled-bodied and disabled worlds together.” Five wheelchair dancers with their partners have come from across the United States to perform during the Pan Am Games. To dance in a wheelchair takes highly developed chair movement skills and many dancers are athletes in other wheelchair sports such as basketball and tennis. Wheelchair dancer Donald Bearden says that the physical requirements of Wheelchair Ballroom are “demanding and being athletic is a must.” Wheelchair Dancer Alyse Einbender has been paralyzed for 10 years and began dancing two years ago. She also speaks to the physical demand of the sport saying that “those of us in wheelchairs probably have to work harder than our standing partners.” When together, the fluidity of the couples is seamless and it looks like this dance was designed for the mix of seated and standing partners. The organization’s dancers also represented the United States of America in the World Paralympic Wheelchair DanceSport Championships.

Andrew Davies of the local arts organization No. 9 curated Water’s Edge which stunningly demonstrates the often tenuous balance where human civilization, land and water meet. This large scale exhibition of 80 works features works by six renowned photographers from Pan-American countries, and besides James Balog includes Edward Burtynsky (Canada), Sebastião

Salgado (Brazil), Cristina Mittermeier (Mexico), Jorge Uzon (Chile) and Gustavo Jononovich (Argentina). Featured in the 2012 Oscar nominated documentary Chasing Ice. Balog has taken up studying and observing the human modification of our planet's natural systems. Incredibly, he began displaying solid evidence of global warming through powerful photographs in order to witness not only the fruits of human progression in society, but unfortunately, the environmental degradation that comes along with it. Balog gave a presentation at Water's Edge Fresh Water Symposium at Evergreen Brickworks on July 10 using footage to demonstrate the effects of global warming on glacial ice using time-lapse photography, conventional photography, and video.



For media-related inquiries about these programs, please contact: Madina Turdieva, Media Specialist for U.S. Consulate General Toronto, at TurdievaM@state.gov. Photographs from American DanceWheels' performances in Toronto are available in our [Flickr gallery](#). More information about the dancers is available on our [Facebook page](#). Follow updates about the performances using #WheelchairTango hashtag on Twitter.
